

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN TEMPERAMENT: CREATING A FOUNDATION FOR NURSES TOWARD POSITIVE AND RESPECTFUL INTERACTIONS WITH PATIENTS AND OTHERS

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**Abstract:** The first step toward understanding oneself and others is through temperament and despite the core values of a nurse, which include; human dignity, integrity, autonomy, altruism, and social justice, numerous public misconceptions exist regarding nurses. They are often unfairly claimed to be rude, arrogant, lacking manners, and deficient in building human relationships and empathy with their patients and others. The paper highlight the four basic temperament and how one can analyze his/her own temperament with a view of exploring the ways nurses can relate in a positive and respectful interactions with patients and others regardless of their temperament. The article recommend integrating the comprehension of one's own temperament and understanding why people act (behave) the way they do into nursing practice as this will provide a foundation aimed not only at enhancing the quality of care but also fostering healthier relationships between nurses and patients.

**Keywords:** Temperament; Nurses; Patients; Relationship

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Temperament is the main reason why we act the way we do and why we do what we do, its influences everything we do including the way we get along with other people. The traits of temperament are mostly innate traits that we are born with, although an individual's family, culture or their experiences can influence them. A person's temperament style plays a role in how they behave and interact with other people and within their world [1].

The first step toward understanding oneself and others is through temperament, as stated by William James. He proposed that the art of life lies in our ability to manage our temperament. Nursing profession is one that requires not only technical expertise but also a profound understanding of human behavior and interaction. As healthcare providers, nurses play a pivotal role in facilitating positive and respectful interactions with patients. The nature of nurse-patients' relationship in healthcare settings is pivotal in ensuring good and efficient healthcare delivery [2].

Despite the core values of a nurse, which include human dignity, integrity, autonomy, altruism, and social justice[3], numerous public misconceptions exist regarding Nigerian nurses. They are often unfairly claimed to be rude, arrogant, lacking manners, and deficient in building human relationships and empathy with their patients and others.

This paper will cover the four basic types of temperament, how you can analyze your own temperament and others, the importance to nurses, and suggest ways in which nurses can relate in a positive and respectful interaction with patients and others regardless of their temperament, as balanced temperament is the key to a peaceful and fulfilling life.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON FOUR (4) BASIC TEMPERAMENT TYPES

The heart of the temperament theory, as first conceived by Hippocrates over twenty-four hundred years ago, divides people into four basic categories, namely:

1. Sanguine
2. Choleric
3. Melancholy, and
4. Phlegmatic.

Each temperament type has both strengths and weaknesses that form a distinct part of ones makeup throughout life. Once a person diagnoses his own basic temperament, he is better equipped to ascertain what vocational opportunities he is best suited for and what natural weaknesses he must work on to keep from short-circuiting his potential and creativity [4].



Figure 1 Temperament Chart

Source: TimLahaye.com

### 2.1 Sanguine (The “Populous Sanguine”)

Sanguine is a warm, buoyant, cheerful, and "enjoying" individual. Because he is naturally receptive, external influences easily make their way to his heart, causing an eruption of response. Sanguine is often referred to as a super extrovert due to his outgoing personality. They have an uncommon capacity for enjoying himself and usually passes on his fun loving energy. When they enter a room, they tend to brighten the spirits of everyone present by his lively chat. They are fascinating storytellers, and his warm, emotive demeanor nearly allows you to relive the incident as he describes it. Sanguine never lacks friends. They truly understand the pleasures and sufferings of those they encounter and have the ability to make him feel significant, as if they were a very precious friend. Their innate abilities will also benefit them if they choose occupations in marketing, travel, fashion, cooking, or sports[4].

**Strengths:** adventurous, creative, and just plain likable; thrives on social interactions and sharing life with others[5].

**Weaknesses:** May struggle with follow-through and gets easily over-committed; can lack self-control or tend to avoid the tougher parts of life and relationships[5].

### 2.2 Choleric (The “Powerful Choleric”)

Choleric is hot, swift, active, practical, strong-willed, self-sufficient, and extremely independent. He has a definite and opinionated personality and finds it easy to make decisions for himself and others. Choleric, like Sanguine, is an extrovert, albeit not as intense. Choleric thrives in activity. Their unwavering dedication typically leads them to achieve where others have failed. Mr. Choleric's emotional nature is the least developed aspect. They do not readily relate with others, nor do they naturally show or express compassion. They are frequently embarrassed or repulsed by the cries of others and are generally oblivious to their needs. They show little appreciation for music and fine arts, unless his secondary temperament qualities are sad. They invariably seek utilitarian and constructive ideals in life. The choleric, who prefers swift, almost intuitive appraisal over analysis, tends to focus at the goal for which they are working without considering the potential traps and barriers in the route. They have a dominant and demanding personality and are not afraid to utilize others to achieve their goals. Choleric individuals excel in roles that involve leadership, decision-making, and strategic thinking. Ideal career fields for them include management, technology, statistics, engineering, programming, and business, where their dynamic and driven nature can thrive[4].

**Strengths:** A born leader with energy, enthusiasm, and a strong will, self-confident and optimistic.

**Weaknesses:** May struggle with being empathetic to others' needs, and can tend toward being controlling and overly critical of others [5].

### 2.3 Melancholic (The "Perfectionist Melancholic")

Melancholy is the richest of all temperaments. They are analytical, selfless, gifted, perfectionists with a highly sensitive emotional character. Nobody enjoys the beautiful arts more than the gloomy. They are naturally introverted; nevertheless, because their feelings take precedence, they are prone to a range of mood swings. They will occasionally lift people to ecstatic heights, causing them to become more outgoing. However, at times, they will be gloomy and unhappy, and during these moments, they will withdraw and become aggressive.

Melancholic individuals are highly sociable and driven by a strong desire to positively impact their community. Their meticulous nature and attention to detail make them exceptional managers with commendable interpersonal skills. Ideal career paths for those with a melancholic temperament include roles in management, accounting, social work, and administration, where their precision and dedication can shine[4].

**Strengths:** Naturally skilled at keeping things organized and humming along smoothly; a faithful friend who connects deeply with people.

**Weaknesses:** May struggle with perfectionism or negativity (of self and others); and can be easily overwhelmed by life [5].

### 2.4 Phlegmatic (The "Peaceful Phlegmatic")

A phlegmatic personality is typically social. Phlegmatic people value interpersonal harmony and tight relationships, which makes them faithful spouses and caring parents. They make an effort to maintain their relationships with old acquaintances, distant family members, and neighbors.

Phlegmatic individuals are naturally sociable and attract many friends with their dry, subtle sense of humor. They can make others laugh heartily without even cracking a smile themselves. Their talent for finding humor in the everyday actions of others helps them maintain a positive outlook on life. With a sharp, retentive mind, they excel in imitating others and have a remarkable ability to remember details.

The phlegmatic personality type is calm, easygoing, and has a high boiling point. They rarely grow furious and they are the most approachable, appealing personality type and the easiest type of person to get along. By nature, they are the most likeable of all the temperaments. They are very much into charity and helping others. Ideal careers for phlegmatic personality types should be related to; Nursing, Teaching, Psychology or Counseling, Child Development, Social Services[4].

**Strengths:** supportive, empathetic, and a great listener; often the peacemaker looking out for others; easily contented and happy to be part of the team (not the boss) .

**Weaknesses:** may struggle to take initiative when necessary, and can avoid conflict and sharing strong feelings [5].

## 3 ANALYZING YOUR OWN TEMPERAMENT

Your predominant or basic temperament, the one that influences you the most, should not be too difficult to diagnose. Just ask yourself a few questions while looking at the following illustrations[4].

1. Are you an extrovert? If so, you are predominantly sanguine or choleric.
2. If "yes" to 1, ask yourself, "Do I lean toward being a super extrovert?" That is, are you generally the first to speak? If so, you are a sanguine.
3. If "yes" to 1, ask yourself if you are a good salesman type. If so, you are predominantly sanguine.
4. If "yes" to 1, but "no" to 2 and 3, ask, "Am I a 'strong natural leader?'" If so, you are probably a choleric.
5. If you answered "no" to 1—that is, you are not an extrovert—then ask yourself, "Am I a perfectionist, analytical, and somewhat critical?" If so, you are probably predominantly melancholy.

If you answered "no" to 1, ask yourself if you are known by others as "very quiet." Do you rarely get angry but experience many fears and worries? If so, you are probably phlegmatic. This, of course, is an oversimplified test, and it only considers your predominant temperament. However, it will help you even at this point to have a strong indication of which temperament you are (P. 32-33) [4].

## 4 THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING ONES OWN TEMPERAMENT TO NURSES

Understanding one's own temperament is a crucial aspect for nurses as it forms the foundation for positive and respectful interactions with patients and others. The following are some of the importance:

1. **Self-awareness:** Nurses need to engage in self-reflection to understand their own temperament. This involves recognizing personal strengths, weaknesses, and patterns of behavior. Self-awareness enables nurses to identify potential triggers that may affect their interactions with patients and colleagues.

2. **Self-improvement:** Once you have examined your weaknesses and understand why you act the way you do, you are better able to call upon God for his resources to improve your temperament by strengthening your weaknesses.
3. **Understanding and accepting others;** As long as you live, people will confront you. When you understand why they do what they do, it is easier to accept and love them.
4. **Effective Communication:** Different temperaments may require varied communication styles. Nurses who understand their own temperament can adapt their communication to meet the needs of diverse patients. Clarity, patience, and active listening become essential components of effective communication in healthcare settings.
5. **Conflict Resolution:** Healthcare environments often involve high-stress situations and potential conflicts. Understanding one's temperament helps nurses manage conflicts with patients, families, and colleagues more effectively. By remaining self-aware during tense moments, nurses can respond in a way that promotes resolution rather than escalating the situation.
6. **Building Trust and Rapport:** Patients are more likely to trust and engage with healthcare providers who demonstrate authenticity and consistency. Understanding one's own temperament contributes to a consistent and trustworthy nursing approach. Consistency in temperament creates a stable and predictable environment for patients, fostering a sense of security and trust.
7. **Stress Management:** Nursing can be emotionally demanding. Understanding one's temperament aids in recognizing personal stressors and implementing effective coping strategies. Stress management contributes to a nurse's overall well-being and, by extension, positively impacts the quality of care provided.

## **5 HOW NURSES CAN RELATE IN A POSITIVE AND RESPECTFUL INTERACTIONS WITH PATIENTS AND OTHERS REGARDLESS OF THEIR TEMPERAMENT**

Nurses are the only professionals that stay with the patient's 24hours clockwise and also, they are the professionals that get connected more to the patient's relatives and other healthcare workers ( such as the physician, physiotherapist, pharmacist, nutritionist, radiologist, lab scientist etc.) within the healthcare settings.

Interpersonal relationships between people, including those between nurses and patients as professionals, are one of the main challenges to human coexistence. One of the main causes of many communication breakdowns between people is a lack of interpersonal skills, or the inability to accept people for who they are and relate to them based on their personality traits, our temperament diversities could also be major reasons why humans have become intolerant of one another [6].

Some temperament types are more suited for interpersonal relationships than others are. Certain temperaments are more complimentary and submissive, whereas others are more dominant and egotistical, which may account for their shortcomings. Certain temperaments require consistency in their traits and lifestyles in order to establish and sustain a friendly relationship. This inconsistencies no doubt often hinders them from having a peaceful and long lasting interpersonal relationship [6].

However, for the nurse to relate perfectly with anyone regardless of their temperament, the followings steps should be followed:

Step 1: Understand your own temperament- this serve as the bedrock and foundation for a cordial relationship. With this, you will be able to discover your potentials and identify your weaknesses so that you will be able to work over it in order to improve your relationship pattern

Step 2: Discover other peoples temperament- the nurse must understand and know the temperament of everyone she relate with, which clearly control and Influences the way they do things. Having a very clear understanding of everyone's temperament will enable nurse to know the inherent strengths and weaknesses that are embedded in such temperament, and how best to relate with the patients and others within the healthcare settings.

Step 3: Apply the Coulomb's law- The law states that like charges repel while unlike charges attract. This implies that people with similar primary temperament do not attract each other and will not be at peace with each other when they stay together for long. On the other hand, people with a dissimilar temperament find themselves attractive to each other and have it simple to overcome each other weaknesses. Therefore, the nurse should react to her patients and others based on their various inherent temperament.

The sociologist often said melancholy have a mutual relationship with the sanguine better than to other temperament types. Moreover, the choleric get attracted more to the phlegmatic. Nevertheless, if the nurse want to build a better relationship with others, she must kill self-love, and realize that her patients/clients has weaknesses the same way she do.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, nurses are expected to be good human managers with excellent human relations with their patients and others within healthcare settings, regardless of their inherited temperament categories. Therefore, consciously integrating the comprehension of one's own temperament and understanding why people act and behave the way they do into nursing practice will provide a foundation aimed not only at enhancing the quality of care but also at fostering healthier relationships between nurses and patients.

**COMPETING INTERESTS**

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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